

TRANSPORTATION OF DESTITUTE AMERICANS FROM
VICTORIA TO SAN FRANCISCO.

LETTER

FROM

THE SECRETARY OF STATE,

ASKING

*An appropriation to defray expenses for transporting destitute Americans
from Victoria to San Francisco.*

DECEMBER 16, 1858.—Referred to the Committee of Ways and Means and ordered to be printed.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 14, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to enclose herewith a letter to the chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means, requesting an appropriation of five thousand dollars to defray the expenses of transporting destitute Americans from Victoria, Vancouver's island, to San Francisco, in one of the steamships of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, and will thank you to give it the proper direction.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

LEWIS CASS.

HON. JAMES L. ORR,

Speaker of the House of Representatives.

DEPARTMENT OF STATE,
Washington, December 14, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to transmit herewith copies of letters from Mr. W. H. Davidge, president of the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, claiming, on the part of that company, compensation for the transportation, in one of their steamers, of seventy-four destitute Ameri-

cans from Victoria, Vancouver's Island, to San Francisco, which, at \$20 each, amounts to \$1,480.

There is no appropriation from which this claim can be paid, and, as it appears from the letter of Mr. Davidge that similar cases are likely to occur, I have the honor to suggest the propriety of making provision for their payment, by an appropriation for that object of five thousand dollars.

I have the honor to be, sir, your obedient servant,

LEWIS CASS.

HON. JOHN S. PHELPS,

*Chairman of the Committee of Ways and Means,
House of Representatives.*

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY,

New York, November 16, 1858.

SIR: I have the honor to advise you that Mr. John Nugent sent from Victoria (Vancouver's Island) to San Francisco, by one steamer of this company, seventy-four destitute Americans, because "humanity and national pride forbid that they should die on a foreign soil." He states in his letter that hundreds would follow by another steamer. He does not assume to have the authority of our government, but acts from motives of charity.

Will you be kind enough to advise me whether there is no way of reimbursing this company for services thus rendered: and if no legal authority now exists, may I hope that you will submit the matter to the proper tribunal for action. Our agents concurred to a certain extent in this humane cause, but the burden is so heavy that we cannot assume it in justice to our stockholders. We cannot extend charity to an extent which clearly violates duty, but I will be too glad if the department can suggest some mode of relieving these unfortunates which will not throw this burden upon the shareholders, but may yet enable our company to prove an instrument in relieving misfortune without incurring loss.

With high respect, I have the honor to be, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM H. DAVIDGE,

President.

HON. LEWIS CASS,

Secretary of State.

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY,

New York, November 29, 1858.

SIR: I have had the honor to receive your letter of 17th instant, stating that if I would forward to the department "an account for the transportation of our unfortunate countrymen" you would submit "the same to Congress with a favorable recommendation."

I accordingly enclose a certificate of the secretary of this company of the number transported and of the price of passage charged other passengers in the same steamer. As further accounts of this nature are received they will be transmitted to you.

I indulge the hope that Congress will at an early day indicate the course to be taken in this matter, and that it will be unnecessary to deny to these unfortunate men the means of reaching American soil. Having in charge solely the interests of stockholders, it is neither within the discretion of myself nor any subordinate officer or agent of the company to expend the money of others for charitable purposes, but I may renew to you the assurance that we will exert every effort and use our power to prevent destitution and suffering among our countrymen at Vancouver's Island.

I will only add that the rate of passage by the steamer in question was about two-thirds the usual rate of passage.

I have the honor to be, very respectfully, your obedient servant,

WM. H. DAVIDGE,
President.

Hon. LEWIS CASS,
Secretary of State, Washington.

PACIFIC MAIL STEAMSHIP COMPANY,
New York, November 29, 1858.

I certify that, at the request of John Nugent, special agent of the United States government at Victoria, Vancouver's Island, the company transported from that port to San Francisco, California, seventy-four destitute Americans in its steamer "Northerner," which left the port above mentioned on the twelfth day of October, 1858.

The rate named for each passage in the steerage was \$20, which will make the amount due the Pacific Mail Steamship Company, for the service, fourteen hundred and eighty dollars, (\$1,480.)

FREDERIC HOFFMAN,
Secretary.

